

The Tuktuks

(EXCERPT FROM *Kisses in the Nederends*)

IN HIS VISION Seru saw the human body as a world in itself, a world inhabited by human-like creatures, the tuktuks, who organised themselves into tribes occupying territories located only in those parts of the body that contained organs and members, the most populous being lands in the lower erogenous regions. The arms and the legs were completely uninhabited and were visited only occasionally by a few intrepid hunters.

Tuktuk territories were grouped into upper and lower zones. Uppertuk tribes were those that occupied territories above the solar plexus, the Lowertuk tribes being those that lived from the abdomen down. Within each zone tribes were ranked according to their relative locations, above or below each other, the highest being those in the brain territories, the lowest those tuktuks who lived in the arse and the genitals.

It was the brain tribes who invented the ranking system, claiming that since they were the only ones who could see, hear, and smell things outside their body-world because of their commanding proximity to its major apertures, and that since they lived in the loftiest territories, far above the muck in the abdomen and the filth in the anal region, they were the best and cleanest tuktuks of all. They also believed that they were the cleverest since they had the good sense to live in the best part of the body-world. Uppertuks said that the worst, nastiest, dirtiest, smelliest, vilest, and generally the most beastly tuktuks were those who occupied the largely swampy territories of the arse. The most degenerate, horny, porno-brained, disgustingly obscene, perverted, and generally the most licentiously abandoned and loathsome were tuktuks who lived in the genital region.

Tuktuks subsisted on hunting ninongs, moose-like creatures that fed upon germs. They hunted with bows and arrows, spears, and boomerangs. Because ninongs lived in different environments and fed upon different types of germs, they varied greatly in kind, size, taste, and nutritional composition. The largest, tastiest, most nutritious, and therefore the most

desired and prized were called nambawan ninongs, found only in the genital and anal territories. These heavenly creatures fed upon a special type of germ carried around by crab lice that inhabited the nethermost regions and nowhere else. It was natural therefore that anal and genital tuktuks called their parts of the body-world the Happy Hunting Grounds.

From the milk of the nambawan ninong was made a unique kind of cheese known as liebfraufromage, which had the aroma of the Red Rose of Sodom and the combined taste of twenty species of the Forbidden Fruit. Since this cheese was matured only by being buried for ten years in anal swamps, it was the exclusive product of the arse dwellers. Tuktuks were known to have sold their entire families down the drain for a single bite of the liebfraufromage.

Since tuktuks lived entirely on ninongs and ninong dairy products, it was absolutely necessary that they trade with each other in order to vary their diet and broaden their nutritional bases. The ninong trade was conducted and controlled by tribes in the brain region who had convinced all others of their superior organisational ability and business honesty. The main trade route to and from the brain region was the spinal cord, while the nerves served as roads that branched out to the rest of the body-world. Groups of ninong traders and their long lines of carriers were always trekking from one territory to another, buying and selling. There was fierce competition among these traders for the body-world distribution of liebfraufromage and nambawan ninongs.

Between the Uppertuks of the brain region and the Lowertuks of the anal and genital territories, there was little love lost. Much of their mutual animosity arose from the Uppertuk resentment of the fact that the things they wanted most were available only in the lowest regions. To obtain these products they had to go to those areas that to them were extremely unhealthy, filthy, and disgusting, and deal with tribes they considered far beneath them in intelligence and in physical and moral cleanliness. Through their familiarity with these lowest regions the brain Uppertuks had amassed a corpus of epithets that they freely hurled at Lowertuks, words directly related to the perceived characteristics of their environments. Uppertuks called Lowertuks arseholes, arselickers, buggers, bums, bullshitters, cocksuckers, cunts, fart faces, fuckwits, fucking this, fucking that, greedy guts, shitheads, turds, wankers, and other luridly offensive expressions. They characterised the mental and moral capacities of Lowertuks as piss weak and shit awful and their achievements as cockups. Lowertuk tattooists, cave

painters, bone carvers, nose-flute players, chanters, and rain dancers were referred to as arty farty bullshit artists and poofters. In the department of invective, Lowertuks were at a distinct disadvantage. They could not use the words Uppertuks had invented for them because that would only demean their surroundings, of which they were extremely fond and proud. And since not one of them had ever been to the brain lands they knew next to nothing about life in the lofty region. All they could say of the Uppertuks was that they were dunderheads, thickheads, dummkopf, dum dum, bird-brained, nitwit, numbskull, scatter-brained, stupid, boofy, gormless, and other similarly inoffensive expressions.

Peace, stability, and prosperity prevailed in the body-world as long as ninongs abounded in every territory, each tribe limited its hunting to its own domain, no one tried to monopolise or in any way interfere with the ninong trade, and tuktuks confined their conflicts to exchanges of invective.

"Human beings are healthy only as long as the tuktuks inside them live in relative peace," Seru said. "But since there is no such thing as a perfect body-world, tuktuks are always in strife. Sometimes they confine their conflicts within a single territory, at times two or more regions are involved, and every now and then the whole body-world is at war. All diseases and illnesses in the human body and mind are caused by the messy tribal and intertribal relationships among the tuktuks.

"Oilei, your bottom's in a mess and your head's in turmoil because of long-drawn-out struggles between the arse and the brain tuktuks and among the brain dwellers themselves."

Many years before Oilei was stricken, Seru said, a ninong trading expedition headed by Bongotuk, chieftain of the smallest brain tribe, went to the anal region to get as many of the nambawan ninongs and as much liebfraufromage as he could for the initiation feast of his eldest daughter. While en route Bongotuk left the track on the only hill inside the region to attend to a call of nature. As he stepped a little distance into the bush he found a cave, the small mouth of which hid a huge natural chamber in which were stacked mounds of tuktuk skeletons. Bongotuk knew instantly that he had stumbled into the secret burial place of the anal tuktuks, the most sacred of their sacred grounds, which, until then, no outside tuktuk had ever seen. Being an Uppertuk who held the utmost contempt for Lowertuks, Bongotuk defecated in the cave without qualm. While squatting he picked up a shining round object and started bouncing it. He noticed that the cave was

piled high with similar objects and said to himself, "I must take some for my little children." He stuffed many balls into his shoulder bag and left.

When the expedition returned home, Bongotuk bounced one ball in front of his children. As it bounced around it fell into the fireplace and exploded loudly, shattering a potful of ninongs. Bongotuk was amazed. He threw in another ball, which exploded with a terrific bang. Then he placed a trussed-up ninong near the fire and banged another ball, which killed the creature instantly. He thought for a while and, being a brainy tuktuk, searched for a strip of highly inflammable material, which he attached to another ball, lit it, and tossed the lot into the air. It went off and blew to pieces a large germ flying by.

Being a cruel and unscrupulous leader, Bongotuk saw in the balls the means to attain his long-held ambition to become the paramount chief of all the brain tribes and therefore control the entire ninong and liebfraufromage trade. Accordingly he sent his three sons and trusted minions secretly to the cave to fetch a large supply of balls, which he used to impose his dominance over all the hitherto-independent brain tribes and united them under a single rule for the first time ever. He had also despatched a strong force of warriors to take possession of the cave and prevent anyone else from gaining access.

The anal tuktuks protested vehemently against the desecration of their sacred ground. When these protests fell on deaf ears they mounted a series of attacks on the intruders, who easily repelled them with their explosives, killing a great number. Those who survived were hounded and slaughtered mercilessly, and their families massacred. In time Bongotuk subjugated the anal and genital tuktuks, forced them into breeding nambawan ninongs and manufacturing more liebfraufromage, levying a seventy percent tax in kind on all that they produced. Bongotuk also subjugated all the other tribes of the Lowertuk territories and was set on conquering the rest of the body-world. At the home front, Bongotuk's tribe had formed the ruling class of the new paramountcy and had reduced all the other tribes to the rank of carriers in the ninong trade. Bongotuk was hated both at home and abroad.

"Almost a year ago, just before you started feeling the pain in your arse," Seru addressed Oilei, "the anal tuktuks, instigated by their intolerable oppression and the continued desecration of their most sacred ground, rose in an open rebellion against their oppressors. From the beginning they have used guerrilla tactics because their weapons cannot match those of

Bongotuk's forces. They normally ambush Bongotuk's troops and retreat quickly into the deepest and densest swamps, where enemy warriors would not go on account of the filth and the stench. Using bows to fire explosive missiles, Uppertuks are bombarding these swamps, thus giving you the nasty pain in the arse.

"Even more recently the brain tuktuks from the oppressed tribes have taken advantage of the diversion caused by the Lowertuk rebellion to rise up and fight for their own liberation. They are set on overthrowing the ruling class. Bongotuk's warriors are bombarding the rebels, causing the nasty migraine that has doubled your suffering.

"The point is that there are two full-scale rebellions in your body-world. There's civil war in your brain and a Lowertuk guerrilla campaign against foreign domination. Your pains will persist as long as these conflicts remain unresolved. You will have even more pain if the other Lowertuk tribal territories rise against Bongotuk."

"That's the most fantastic thing I've ever heard, Seru," Oilei marvelled. "The rebellions sound exactly like what you hear from the BBC news service every day."

Note

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Oilei and Babu

(EXCERPT FROM *Kisses in the Nederends*)

IT WAS LATE in the afternoon when Bulbul arrived. He emerged from the driver's seat, walked to the other side, and opened the passenger door. A tall, elderly, lean, white-haired and white-bearded man wearing a dhoti and carrying a battered briefcase stepped out, took a deep breath, and, escorted by Bulbul, walked lightly up the path towards the house.

Oilei watched all this from the open doorway, surprised at seeing his friend acting the chauffeur. But Bulbul, never known to kowtow to the wealthy and the powerful, always deferred reverentially towards holy men of all religions.

"I have brought the great yogi and sage, Babu Vivekenand, who most generously and graciously offers you his services. Babu, this is my best friend, Oilei Bomboki, of whom I have already told you," Bulbul introduced them stiffly.

"The Creator of all things showers his blessings upon you," Babu said. "I have heard much about you and must say that I have been very impressed. I and my organisation owe you a great deal. Without knowing it, you have rendered us a great service. No. Do not ask questions; things will be revealed in due course. It is an immense pleasure for me to have this opportunity to be of some use to you. Shall we go inside? Thank you.

"A good house you have here," Babu complimented as he walked in. "Very well ventilated. Ventilation is a necessary feature of any house. There should always be plenty of moving air in confined spaces. Aaah, chairs. . . . No thank you, I prefer the floor. The surfaces on which one stands, sits, or lies must always be firm and solid. Helps to keep the spine straight, thus encouraging good breathing and circulation."

Babu lowered himself on the floor and effortlessly assumed a lotus sitting posture. Oilei and Bulbul followed suit but sat cross-legged facing

him. The sage kept his counsel for a while before he began with the authority of a physician in his surgery.

"Please remove the handkerchief from your face. Thank you. I can see what our friend meant when he gave an account of your problem. All problems in the world are connected, however disparate they may appear on the surface. There are no unrelated or unique problems. We isolate them from each other only because it is easier to deal with them separately. Therein lies an even bigger connected problem. Inasmuch as we deal with reality in piecemeal ways, in the long run we never find lasting solutions. What we always produce are short-term solutions that generate even bigger and more intractable problems.

"Take your illness, for example. Because you thought that only your anus was in trouble, you tried to find a cure for it. Yesterday, as our friend here informed me, you discovered that it was connected with problems elsewhere in the body, although the Rovoni expert misunderstood the real nature of the causes. There are no tuktuks. But your limited and distorted understanding of the larger ramifications of your anal problem is nevertheless evidence of the relatedness of things. We talk of things as if they were separate and unique. There is only a single reality, of which we and everything else are manifestations. We are united in the One Infinite, the Absolute Ground of Being. There are no separate existences. Keep this in mind while we deal with your particular case.

"The problem with your anus is rooted in the inherent human tendency to isolate and then divide manifestations of the One Infinite, in this instance, the human body, into different parts and assign to each of them different values. You and most of the rest of humanity look at parts of the body and say that some are good and beautiful and others bad and repulsive. You're proud of some and ashamed of others. You would not, for example, discuss the anus on the same level as the eyes. The body itself is a unity and together with the mind and the soul forms a larger unity of the being. You can go on from there indefinitely. The whole phenomenon is very complex and requires a great deal of intellectual effort to fully comprehend. We shall not go into it here, for most of it cannot be articulated through words. You will realise it more and more as you progress with yoga.

"All parts of the human body are of equal value. But you have, in your limited perception of reality, viewed them very differently. People have composed countless songs about the beauty of the eyes, the lips, the hands,

and the breast. But there is no music, no poetry, that extols the merits of the anus. You can flaunt your face and other parts of your body, but if you dare bare your anus in public you will be apprehended for obscenity.

"You should already have noticed that I use the word 'anus' and not 'arse,' which is loaded with the most repulsive connotations associated with a part of the body that is as good, as beautiful, as worthy of lyrical poetry as any. The anus is the most maligned, most unjustly loathed and abused part of the body. When people behave atrociously they are called arseholes. It is extremely reprehensible to compare the innocent anus with the dregs of society. Thoroughly obnoxious people are often called stinking arseholes. Yet they could easily be called stinking armpits or smelly mouths. These parts of the body surely discharge odours as pungent as those that come from any other parts. Also, filthy people are called dirty arseholes. The anus is as clean as any part of the body. And if you think objectively, you will see that the anus is always washed more thoroughly than any part of the body. Most people wash it too vigorously when showering, as if they were punishing it for being there, or trying to rub it off. But the anus has the right to be where it is, and to be treated with respect and love. We treat our heads with respect and call our leaders heads. We could, with equal felicity, call them anuses.

"The anus is like the lower orders of society. It does the most unpleasant jobs and no one would like their daughters to marry garbage collectors. It is class prejudice of the worst order. The great teacher, Jesus of Nazareth, once told his disciples to behave towards the least members of society as they behaved towards him. We must behave likewise towards our anuses. It is therefore necessary to review your whole attitude towards the anus. You must change and be convinced in your being that the anus is good, beautiful, lovable, and respectable.

"You may recall that not many years ago Prime Minister Morarji Desai admitted to drinking his own piddle. Half the world was horrified and repulsed; the other half laughed. Almost everyone missed the great symbolic significance of the Prime Minister's behaviour; and that is, no part or product of the human being and therefore no human being is inherently repulsive and detestable. We must therefore bestow on the anus the dignity it has long been denied and restore it to its rightful and equal place among the honoured parts of our bodies. Only when you love and respect the rights of the lowliest member of your own body can you really love and

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respect the rights of the least members of your society. Mahatma Gandhi launched India on a new road by calling the untouchables 'children of God' and giving them equal rights. We must do more by adding to the revered triumvirate of the body, mind, and soul, the hitherto lowly anus.

"It is only when you are able to lovingly and respectfully kiss your own anus, and those of your fellow human beings, that you will know you have purified yourself of all obscenities and prejudices, and have overcome your worst fears and phobias. You will then be able to see with utmost clarity the true nature of beauty, which is the essence of the unity and equality of all things. For while you assign different values to different parts of your body and consider some of them dirty, disgusting, and shameful, you will continue to assign the same values but with even greater intensity to similar parts of other people's bodies. That is, of course, a short route to hating and loathing them. Only when you treat every part of your body equally can you begin your journey towards true love. And once there, your life will harmonise with the One Infinite, and all your pains and agues will disappear. Sickness, disease, and death strike us because of disharmonies in our existence. But when we synchronise our lives with the Eternal Programme of the Universe, we will live forever.

"You can see now what I mean by the interconnectedness of all life and what happens when these connections are weakened or broken. I could continue along this line but it suffices for the moment that you have seen the broader context of your problem. There are practical steps you must take to reconcile your anus with the rest of your being and with the One Infinite so that you may be cured of your illness. These steps consist of two sets of yoga exercises.

"The first is relatively easy to master. The object is to enable you to see your anus closely for so often and for such prolonged periods that it is not strange and disgusting any more. It will be as normal and familiar to you as are the palms of your hands; and to your nose, it will be as the fresh bud of spring. You will also marvel at the beauty of its structure and formation and at the rhythm of its movements. At the end of all this, you will have written a poem, 'Ode to My Lovely Anus,' which you may put to music and perform to rapturous audiences."

Babu then paused and rose to demonstrate what he wanted Oilei to achieve at the end of the first series of yoga exercises. He took off his dhoti, folded it neatly and placed it aside, bent down very easily from the waist,

hands behind him, placed his head between the unbent knees, parted his buttocks, and looked up at his anus. Oilei was enraptured by the old man's suppleness.

The yogi returned to his sitting position after he had put on his clothes.

"The second series of exercises will enable you to reach your anus," he said as he stretched on his back and raised his legs and waist so that they were perpendicular to the rest of his body. Then he lifted his torso so that only the base of his spine remained on the floor. Following this, he spread his legs wide apart and bent his head until his nose touched his buttocks. Then slowly and gracefully he disengaged his head, lowered his body, and returned to the sitting position.

"This second series of exercises will enable you to do what I have just done. They are not easy but if you do them conscientiously and properly you should be able to reach your goal in six to twelve months. You must remember that at your age your bones and muscles are stiff. But everything is possible given concentration and the will to succeed. You obviously had these qualities in your younger days; let us hope for the sake of your anus that you still have them today.

"When you get to the stage of being able to reach your anus with your nose, you will kiss it several times and, maintaining that position, meditate on it. You will then easily dispose of your revulsion and free yourself from the attitudes that inhibit your perception of the love that dwells in the unity of all things, and you will attain the state of harmony that will, by its very existence, cure you of all maladies. From that point on you will progress to higher things such as kissing other people's anuses. But you must obtain their consent first, and do it in complete privacy or you will be in trouble with the law. When this practice becomes widespread we will be in a position to press for law reform; and we will get reform just as other previously abhorrent practices have been legalised."

Oilei could not understand all this; the very idea of bussing his own and other people's arseholes was most absurd and disgusting.

"Babu," he said hesitantly, "you said what you have said, but will you really act on it, like kissing your own arse, er, anus?"

"Of course. I've done it many times. Watch me carefully."

And the great sage disrobed, stretched out on his back, raised the lower and upper parts of his body as before, spread his legs wide apart, used both

hands to spread his buttocks, and buried his nose in it. He repeated the action several times in the most dignified and graceful manner before he put his dhoti back on and resumed his lotus position.

Utterly fascinated by the performance, Oilei said in all sincerity, "Babu, will you kiss my anus?"

"Certainly, and most willingly. I had expected that request, as a matter of fact."

Oilei disrobed and bared his bottom at the holy man, not quite certain that he would do it. But Babu rose into a kneeling position, parted Oilei's buttocks delicately, and in a reverential and sacramental manner, placed his nose inside. He drew back and repeated the action three more times before he resumed his lotus posture, saying, "I have kissed your blessed anus with love and respect. If the presidents of the United States and the Soviet Union do likewise at their next summit meeting, there will be no more threat of nuclear annihilation and there will be set an example for all the leaders of the world to emulate. As in most things we must begin from the top down. When the top meets the bottom, there will be eternal peace."

Oilei noticed a change in the old man's demeanour as Babu paused before launching himself into something that seemed to have troubled him profoundly.

"The anus, as you have now seen, is neither revolting nor obscene. The most revolting and obscene thing we live with today is the threat of nuclear annihilation. It is obscene because of the spectre of destruction that it presents to all of us, but more so because it perpetuates, for as long as nuclear weapons exist, the fears, suspicions, and hatreds that blind us to the beauty of creation; that is, the love, trust, and respect that we can have for one another.

"Those who possess and control the most dangerous means of destruction have condemned themselves to live with increasing paranoia that breeds psychopathic behaviour; this may very well lead to their own undoing and the undoing of us all. They have spread that paranoia to their neighbours, satellites, and client states. Every country that deals intimately with them has caught their incurable disease. The balance of terror they hold out to be the mainstay of peace means increasingly terrified populations, which know peace only as a precarious state of no war. Balance of terror is the most obscene invention of the human mind. Those who live in it live in terror disguised as vigilance and will never find serenity of mind and the true love of all life that are preconditional for lasting peace. Those who control the

most destructive weapons, those who allow their territory to harbour such weapons, and those who are directly and intensively influenced by them, are progressively psychopathically violent in every sense of the word. More and more they admire and worship violence and vengeful Ramboism.

"You are slightly fortunate in the South Pacific in that your relationships with them are not yet quite as intimate as others'. You must therefore keep them at arm's length so that you at least may maintain a semblance of civility and humanity that will make your conditions bearable. The purveyors of the balance of terror are sending their emissaries, their nuclear ships and submarines to your shores to draw you into the vortex of their paranoia, for they can neither conceive of nor tolerate the idea that there are human beings who are genuinely free and wish to remain free of the self-inflicted fears that are undermining the foundations of their societies. You must remember that the dinosaurs did not kill each other off; each was its own murderer.

"Only one country in your region has been sane and courageous enough to tell the purveyors of terror to keep their madness to themselves. You must join this country and try to join with men and women in the fear-racked, violent societies who are struggling to bring back some measure of sanity to our collective existence.

"One way of contributing to world peace, and this is where your seemingly unrelated and unique personal problem is in fact connected to global issues of great moment, is to spread the gospel that every part of the human body is beautiful and sacred in the eyes of the gods. We must begin from ourselves, from the lowest organs of our bodies, before we expand elsewhere. We must be able to celebrate the anus as we celebrate the mind and the heart, and from there to proclaim that in the realm of the One Infinite we do not call people arseholes, buggers, cunts, dildos, fuckwits, poofters, shits, turds, or wankers. We must greet, love, and dance with each other in the middle of our zones of taboo, for we have not created any real taboos, only the fears and phobias that we, in our limitless capacity for self-delusion, have swept to the boundaries of our cherished conventions, where they remain to haunt us into insanity and violence.

"For you, Oilei, learn to love your anus and those of your neighbours and never again call them arseholes. Kiss your anus and theirs, and you are on the road towards contributing to the healing of our collective self."

The great sage paused and extracted a manila folder from his briefcase and handed it to Oilei.

"In that are copies of the exercises that you will do every morning. It will be months before you reach your goal, but always keep in mind that long-term solutions are the best.

"Finally, you will from now on stop swearing and blaspheming. That will help to clear the fog in your mind and the stains on your soul. Some time after I leave, you will see a miracle."

That evening Oilei was in bed, lost in his recollection of all that Babu had said and done, when Makarita tiptoed in, touched his groin, and whispered loudly, "Hey champ, let's do it. . . . Shhh, cocky, did you hear me?" and tugged at the jackhammer.

"What?"

"I said let's fuck."

"My dear Rita," Oilei spoke from a great distance, "we no longer use that word. It fogs the mind and stains the soul. You should have said, 'Let us persuade our respective members to engage in a sacrament of love.' That's the cleanest way of putting it."

"Engage . . . our members . . . in a sacra . . . oh shit! That's a load of crap!"

"We do not use those words either. Faeces are good, wholesome by-products that are essential to agriculture."

"Agriculture? What's that got to do with turd?"

"Rita my darling . . ."

"Don't my-darling me, you crazy arsehole!"

"Those aren't terms of endearment . . ."

"Endearment! What's wrong with you? Have you lost your fucking balls?"

"My sweet spouse . . ."

"Sweet spouse, for Chrissake! Talk sense! Do you or don't you want a screw?"

"Rita, Rita my beloved. Your name rings of the sounds of Eden. By all means flap your wings, spread your limbs and shortly we shall be in Paradise engaging our respective members . . ."

"O Lord. You've really gone cuckoo this time. Forget that I asked you. Forget it! You're so romantic! I'm off sex for good! Do you hear me? I may as well join a convent!" Rita rushed out weeping with frustration.

Oilei remained still, contemplating the ceiling. He had been a changed man since Babu the yogi anointed his anus. He lowered his eyes slowly and

saw his reflection in the mirror. To his great delight his nose was no longer pink. He checked his bottom; it too had changed colour back to normal. It must have been a result of that kiss of love and respect, he told himself as he drifted off to sleep.

In the early hours of the morning, Makarita woke up to answer a call of nature. She entered the bedroom because she was surprised that the light was still on so late; Oilei was never a night owl. What she saw then convinced her that her husband had really gone around the bend. He was lying there fast asleep while his mouth was frozen in an act of kissing something. Most probably something disgusting, Makarita told herself.

A few hours later she stepped into the lounge to observe Oilei doing some strange exercises she had never seen before. In fact, since she had known him she had not seen him doing any physical exercises. Perhaps he did not need to, because hard work on the farm had kept him superbly trim. She guessed that he was exercising because of the long period of inactivity since his illness began.

"What're you on to now?" she asked.

"I'm doing yoga, my love."

"Yoga?" Makarita had never heard that word before. Neither had Oilei until he met Babu.

"It's a special kind of exercise that enables people to do great things."

"You're not taking up boxing again, are you?"

"Goodness gracious me, no, my beloved. It's something far more significant. Boxing is nothing by comparison. It's something that will contribute tremendously to peaceful intercourse . . ."

"You wouldn't have one with me last night . . ."

"I tried to approach it cleanly but you wouldn't listen. Anyway, what I mean is that what I'm doing will lead to something that will promote the advancement of peace in the world."

"I don't understand."

"The first series of yoga exercises will enable me to look at my anus."

"Your what?" Makarita couldn't believe what she was hearing, especially her husband's avoidance of crude words.

"My anus, you know. It's a clean word that . . ."

"I prefer arse. But why would anyone want to look up his arsehole?"

"So that I may love and respect it."

"Love and respect your own . . . no. You're pulling my leg."

“Far from it, my sweet spouse, I . . .”

“Don’t call me that again, you idiot. Makes me feel like I’m some spilled lemonade. Yuk!”

“Far from it, my dear. You see, when I love and respect my anus, I will kiss it.”

“Kiss your own arse? Sweet Mother of God!!”

“Most certainly yes,” Oilei asserted with the conviction of the born-again street corner preacher. “And afterwards, I will love and respect your anus and kiss it too.”

“Kiss my arse you will, will you? Never!!”

“But that’s not the end of the matter, you see. The time will come when you will love and respect my anus and kiss it too, because . . .”

“Me kissing your bleeding arsehole? I will do no such disgusting thing!! Never!! Urrgh. You make me sick!!”

“Oh, you will, my beloved, when you see the beauty of . . .”

“Your filthy thing down there beautiful? You’re out of your fucking nut!!”

Makarita shrieked with laughter of the kind that comes only from those on the verge of a nervous breakdown. Realising what was happening, she checked herself. She must keep her sanity. Oilei was already over the edge.

“You kiss mine, I kiss yours. That’s what you’re aiming for, aren’t you? What will the neighbours think?”

“Never mind the neighbours, my beloved. I will kiss their anuses too, and they will kiss mine . . .”

“And mine into the bargain, I suppose. So we’re going to have a mass orgy, are we?”

“It will not be an orgy. It’ll be the new eucharist. And if the presidents of the United States and the Soviet Union . . .”

Oilei stopped abruptly when Makarita, for no conceivable reason, began to shriek again and then crashed on the floor and lay still. He lifted her onto the divan, tucked a cushion under her head, checked her breathing, pulse, and eyes, and slapped her lightly on the face several times. She opened her eyes, registered what she saw, and passed out a second time. Oilei slapped her some more until she came to. This time utter horror and disgust stared into his face. She instinctively tightened her legs together, tucked one hand under her bottom, and pushed Oilei away with the other.

“Go away. Don’t touch me. Don’t come near me.” She rose and edged

away from him, still protecting her behind. She opened the front door and disappeared.

Oilei shrugged his shoulders and resumed his exercise.

Note

This excerpt is chapter 7 of the novel *Kisses in the Nederends*, published by Penguin (NZ), Auckland, 1987. Reprinted by University of Hawai’i Press, Honolulu, 1995.